

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

2615 S. GRAND AVE., SUITE 100
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90007



United We Stand



Joseph N. Smith
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, July 13, 2011

Present:

Commissioners

Bob Archuleta, Chair
Carvel Gay, Vice Chair
Dave Culmer
Steve Rosmarin
Stephanie Stone

Absent:

Commissioners

Mark MacCarley
Rudy Garcia
Fred Flores
Ramon Rodriguez

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Colonel Joseph Smith, Director
Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Bob Archuleta called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dennis Kuewa, Director, Veterans Benefits Administration Los Angeles Regional Office. Due to a lack of a quorum, only five Commissioners present, the approval of minutes was postponed.

Roll Call

As noted above.

Chairman's Report

Chair Archuleta expressed his thanks and acknowledged the Commissioners that were present. He stated that he appreciated them and the efforts they made to attend the meetings. The Chair encouraged everyone to attend 4th of July celebrations and acknowledge the men and women that sacrificed their lives to defend our Country in 1776. He stated that we should give thanks to Commissioner Culmer who works everyday in assisting our veterans and to Colonel Smith who served in the Marine Corps., and our own General MacCarley who is overseas we wish a safe return. "God bless you for what you are doing!"

Comments from Audience (three minutes each)

Duke Russell, founder of Abe Lincoln Remembrance, and WW II veteran, stated that he has returned to reissue his request that the Commission assist in petitioning the Governor Brown to save Snyder field at Los Angeles City College. Chair Archuleta congratulated Mr. Russell for getting his story in the Los Angeles Times. Mr. Russell stated that the situation at LA City College is an absolute disaster for veterans; those returning will have no place to and play sports. He distributed copies of a letter that he sent to the Governor and requested that each Commissioner send their own letter to the Governor supporting the need to save the sport field. Mr. Russell

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distributed a copy of the Los Angeles Times article to the Commission. Chair Archuleta thanked him for his report and for his perseverance.

Veterans Back in the Workforce – Gentry Humphrey

Mr. Gentry R. Humphrey, Veterans' Program Coordinator, Los Angeles-Ventura Workforce Services Division (EDD). Mr. Humphrey stated that California is Home to the largest veteran population; there is currently 2 million veterans in the State of California. Each year 30,000 men and women leave military service and return to civilian life in California. The U.S and Los Angeles Chambers of Commerce partnered in "Hiring our Heroes Los Angeles" with the U.S Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Services, California Employment Development Department (EDD), Service Nation: Mission Serve, the U.S. Defense Department, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, the Society for Human Resource Management, and United Way of Los Angeles. His Royal Highness Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Her Royal Highness Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge joined 1,500 veterans and their spouses, as well as government partners, at a "Hiring our Heroes" hiring fair in Los Angeles. The event highlighted a shared dedication to honoring veterans by assisting them as they re-enter civilian life.

Mr. Humphrey stated that the future looks good for veteran programs, the Governor will continue with Hiring a Hero-Hire a Vet, the second one is scheduled for the latter part of October and Veterans Day in November.

Mr. Humphrey distributed a flyer to California's first: Homeless Female Veteran Stand Down on Friday, July 15th at Bixby Park in Long Beach, CA.

Commissioner Stone asked where a returning guardsman would go for assistance and Mr. Humphrey responded that it would be U.S. Department of Labor – Veteran Employment Training.

Colonel Smith stated that Tamiko Hirano, Transportation Foundation of Los Angeles (TFLA), is a 15 year member of ESGR and the Ombudsman for the Southern California area. Ms. Hirano represents California in Washington and she can be reached at (213) 744-1030 x2. Mr. Gentry explained that many employers are not aware of USARAA rights.

Chair Archuleta thanked Mr. Humphrey for his presentation.

LA Regional Office – Dennis Kuewa

Mr. Dennis Kuewa, Director, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Los Angeles Regional Office, stated his bio and copy of his presentation is in each Commissioner's packet for their review.

Mr. Kuewa stated that his office is one of three regional offices in California. In addition to Los Angeles County, they have jurisdiction in Kern, Inyo, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Bernardino Counties. His office is responsible for the payment of over \$67.3 million in monthly benefit payments to over 79,000 veterans and nearly 1900 family members.

Processing Services include the adjudication of claims for service-connected disability compensation. This is their major activity and it involves almost 18,000 pending claims. Claims for most other benefits such non service-connected disability pension, Survivors Benefits, Insurance, GI Bill Education, and Loan Guaranty are processed in regional processing centers in other parts of the country. The second processing activity involves veterans who have already been awarded service-connected evaluations and whose ratings are 20% or higher or 10% if they have a serious employment handicap. This program, Non-Paid Work Experience (NPWE) program places disabled veterans into suitable employment and have successful careers. Services include education, medical and employment services. They partner with EDD in helping the veteran with job search. They currently have 2743 veterans enrolled in the program. Out of this total 169 are in the "Job Ready Services" stage. 1343 are enrolled in a training or education program and so far this fiscal year, they will have rehabilitated at least 200 veterans by September 30; which will be a 10% increase over last year.

Mr. Kuewa went over a new workforce reintegration initiative, the Wounded Warrior Education & Employment Initiative, or E21, is a nationwide DoD funded effort with San Diego being one of six pilot locations. The mission of E21 is to help disabled US military veterans find jobs. This transition program that that the Regional Office is

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interested in is modeled after the "Crane Program" in southern Indiana. Today the program has successfully graduated and placed nearly 100 Wounded Warriors.

Commissioner Stone expressed her satisfaction with the E-Benefit site and how accessible it is to upload forms from the website. Mr. Kuewa stated the organization is continuing to expand their accessibility on-line and in face-to-face contacts.

Colonel Smith stated that on a computer filed claim; face-to-face contact is very important. He also acknowledged Tamiko Hirano and Bill Hoston who last year got 400 jobs for veterans and this year they plan on exceeding that amount.

Commissioner Rosmarin stated that at the Home there are 44 veterans and some are WWII veterans that prefer to "talk" to someone because they fear the computer.

Chair Archuleta thanked Mr. Dennis Kuewa for attending the meeting and for his presentation.

Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin

Commissioner Rosmarin stated that the Lancaster Home is one veteran short of being at capacity which is 60 people. He stated that there is a flyer on the Motorcycle ride on 9/11 in each Commissioner's packet. Also, mentioned that General Gravett is a rider and will be participating at the event. On the Veterans Home Support Committee they have made a resolution and have been working on it with Commissioner Stone and others; he's very hopefully that after the 9/11 event this should become a reality.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report – Colonel Joseph Smith

Colonel Joseph N. Smith, Director, Military and Veterans Affairs provided the following report:

Total National Guard and Reserve personnel activated today total 94,333.

Armed Forces recruiting:

- All four active services met or exceeded their goals for 2011 to date.
- 5 or 6 Reserve Components met or exceeded their 2011 goals to date.
- The Air Force achieved 98% which was 116 short of goal.

New changes to the GI Bill are being published... of note:

- Full in State tuition and fees for undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students will be paid.
- Reimbursement for tests (SAT, LSAT)
- Disabled veterans receiving vocational rehabilitation will receive GI Bill subsistence rate in lieu of what they are receiving now.
- Second Army Sgt. First Class (Leroy Petry) received the Medal of Honor for courageous actions against an armed enemy in Afghanistan.
- DMVA commended by Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission. Bi-annual visit of Quality and Productivity Commission 40% of staff focused on returning combat veterans and 60% of staff taken care of survivors, dependents and benefits.
- Governor Brown's budget signed 6/30/11 kept the \$2.6 million dollars in subvention for County Veterans Service Officers. Thus, despite 2 wars and increased operating costs, subvention remains unchanged since 1997.
- \$375,000 funding from LACo Department of Mental Health is provided for the 2011-12 Navigator Program. I have met with 4 of 5 USC graduate students to work with DMVA veterans' representative starting in September.

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Events:

- Female Veterans Stand Down 7/15 from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm., at Rainbow Lagoon Park, Long Beach.
- Navy Week LA 7/25-31 TBA
- City of Carson Veterans Job Fair 7/29 10:00 am-2:00 pm at 22 Moneta, Carson.
- 60th Anniversary of the Korean War on August 26-28 at the JW Marriott, LA National Cemetery,

Chair Archuleta thanked Colonel Smith for his Department report.

New Business

Commissioner Culmer informed that the White House has reversed policy on suicide condolence letters. President Barrack Obama and Defense Department officials will send condolence letters to the families of service members who commit suicide in a war zone. The president last year ordered a review of the long-held policy of not sending condolence letters to the next of kin of those who commit suicide in war zones. The White House has announced the policy change allowing for condolence letters to be sent.

Item's for Next Month's Agenda

Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin

Housing Vouchers Homeless Veterans – LAHSA

Temporary appointment to replace Commissioner MacCarley and the Second District vacancy – Dave Culmer

Colonel Smith informed the Commission that the absence of Commissioner Garcia is because he is resigning from the Commission and a formal letter will follow.

Chair Archuleta asked Ms. Tamiko Hirano, TFLA, to share with the Commission a success story. An unemployed 50 yr. old veteran wrote to Supervisory Antonovich for help who then forwarded the letter to Colonel Smith. This veteran had been unemployed for 2 years and had sent out thousands of resumes trying to find employment. Colonel Smith asked her and Bill Hoston to help the veteran and they found him a job at Krueger as a food inspector. The veteran is now making twice as much as he ever made.

Ms. Hirano stated that DoD is concern with the high unemployment rate of veterans; currently 27% of veterans and 47% are unemployed disabled veterans.

Chair Archuleta thanked Ms. Hirano for the inspiring success story and for all she and Bill Hoston, TFLA have done to help our veterans.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Culmer; had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Rosmarin; stated that because of the upcoming "Carmageddon" UCLA and the many of the VA staff will not be able to go to work. There will be approximately 300 people including doctors, nurses, and workers housed at the Home so that they won't be affected by the 53-hour closure of the 405 freeway and their commute to the VA Hospital.

Commissioner Stone; stated that on July 6 the "Fast G," a Filipino-American group will be having an event on benefits for the Filipino-American veterans. Also, the Call Center is up on-line and the VA is reaching out to women veterans.

Commissioner Gay; stated his pleasure in seeing all that are present and all the information that was presented.

Commissioner Archuleta; stated his daughter-in-law had been discharged as a Captain and his niece is starting in the Air Force. His wife Rose traveled to Fort Stewart, Georgia to see his son, Capt. Brandon receive his 2nd Bronze Star.

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In closing, he has spoken to Commissioner Garcia about his resignation from the Commission to be close to his wife due to health issues. He extends his heartfelt gratitude to Commissioner Rudy Garcia for all he has done on the Commission and for the veterans. Once a formal resignation letter is received he'd like to send an appreciation letter be sent to Commissioner Garcia on behalf of the Commission.

Chair Archuleta thanked everyone present and adjourned meeting at 3:23 p.m.

Tatiana Rosas
Executive Secretary
July 13, 2011

Note: The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, August 10, 2011 at 1:30 p.m. in Suite 100 at the Department of Public Social Services site at 2615 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA.